

Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois  
2024 Implementation Plan of Foster Parent Law

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## **A. LUTHERAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF ILLINOIS**

### **2024 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOSTER PARENT LAW (Public Act 89/19)**

This 2024 Implementation Plan was developed by foster parents and staff members of Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois (LCFS) in compliance with the Foster Parent Law. Licensing staff, direct service employees, foster parents, and management personnel were involved in this process. LCFS staff and foster parents reviewed the 2023 Plan. Comments and revisions obtained throughout the year were incorporated in the final Implementation Plan for 2023.

This Implementation Plan includes the full statement of each Foster Parent Rights and Responsibility, as they are articulated in the law and in DCFS Rule 340. Descriptions of the strategies by which LCFS partners with foster parents in implementing such rights and responsibilities are represented in this document.

Information about the Foster Parent Law is presented to all Agency staff members. In addition, the Foster Parent Law itself and this implementation plan are reviewed with employees in smaller meetings. The implementation process includes reviewing LCFS' plan and the Foster Parent Law with each foster parent individually and in group meetings. Each foster parent signs a document that is placed in his/her case record, acknowledging the receipt of the information and understanding of his/her rights and responsibilities as a foster parent in the State of Illinois. Presentation and discussion of the Law and the Implementation Plan is integrated into the licensing process.

Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois is a social service agency and an incorporated not-for-profit approved 501 c (3). The address of the Agency's corporate office is One Oakbrook Terrace, Suite 501 Oakbrook Terrace, Il 60181. The Agency provides services throughout the state of Illinois.

## **B. STATEMENT OF FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS**

The rights of each foster parent include, but are not limited to, the following as listed. Pursuant to each right is the response of Lutheran Child and Family Services.

### **1. THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY, RESPECT AND CONSIDERATION AS A PROFESSIONAL MEMBER OF THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM.**

1. In January of every year, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois (LCFS) conducts an annual meeting of stakeholders. Invitees to this meeting include board members, members of congregations, funding bodies, staff from all levels of the organization, consumers, foster parents, and other interested parties. Since child welfare services are critical for LCFS, the involvement of foster parents is valued and encouraged.

2. LCFS values the rights of our stakeholders as recipients and partners in service delivery, outcomes and achievement of our mission. LCFS is devoted to ensuring the rights of our stakeholders are honored with dignity, privacy, informed advocacy, courtesy and mutual respect. Foster parents are essential stakeholders, and LCFS recognizes that foster parents are a critical member of the professional child welfare team who work together to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children. This role is in recognition that foster parents provide the daily support, care and supervision of children entrusted in their care; hence, need information, supports, and two-way communication as it relates to planning, resolving concerns impeding the collaborative process of caring for children, advocacy and the need to be treated as part of the team when conflict arises or barriers need to be addressed. LCFS utilizes multiple forums to enhance and strengthen interactions with foster parents including training, foster parent support groups, Child and Family Team Meetings, home visits by both child welfare specialist and licensing representatives, foster parent appreciation events and conferences.

3. As part of its Continuous Quality Improvement processes, LCFS conducts quarterly surveys regarding service provision and stakeholder's experience with the organization. Surveys are given to clients and foster parents quarterly as part of the peer review process and at the time of discharge/exit from LCFS services. Client's and foster parents are provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return. Clients and foster parents do not have to disclose their identity as a means to provide valuable input and their opinions to the Agency. Through the service process, foster parents have the ability to express any comments, concerns, or issues that they may have. Feedback received is then incorporated into LCFS policies, procedures and practices when improvements have been identified to deliver on the commitment to excellence. As part of their responsibilities, supervisors discuss issues, concerns, and quality of service provision with foster parents. These discussions occur during Child and Family Team Meetings, other structured meetings, licensing monitoring visits or through other modes of communication. When issues arise, the child welfare specialist and supervisor work diligently to resolve the situation. If the issue cannot be rectified, the concern will be addressed as appropriate and needed through the chain of command within the Agency's organizational structure. Foster parents are also able to utilize the LCFS Grievance Procedure if they feel their concerns remain unaddressed. Licensing representatives are able to assist and help advocate for the foster parents through this process.

4. LCFS values the input of foster parents and strives to have regular communication with them whether or not they have a child placed with them. Foster parents are encouraged to regularly communicate with their child welfare specialist and/or licensing representative throughout their time with the Agency. LCFS recognizes the time and effort that our foster parents engage with children and families and that foster parents are encouraged to provide information and any recommendations based on their experiences in caring for a child/ren in their care. During the licensing assessment process, the licensing representative emphasizes their role in supporting foster parents and encourages them to voice any concerns that they may have without fear of retaliation.

5. Foster parent trainings are offered a minimum of quarterly by LCFS. Trainings are offered in-person or virtually. Agency staff are encouraged to participate in trainings to help strengthen their working relationships with foster parents and clients with whom we work. Foster parents and staff are encouraged to suggest and /or select training topics to address their interests and to develop skills to meet their individual needs as well as the needs of the children for whom they are caring.

6. LCFS' Vice President and Chief Operating Officer meet with foster parents to gain feedback and input from them at the LCFS Foster Parent Conference. This information is shared with the LCFS leadership team and is integrated into LCFS strategic and operational plans that may involve professional development Opportunities so that the Agency's staff members, who engage with children, parents, and foster parents are enhancing their skills.

7. LCFS demonstrates respect and appreciation to all foster parents by acknowledging and celebrating their contributions to vulnerable children and families at special events such as annual picnics, foster parent conferences, sponsored trainings, and holiday parties.

8. LCFS has an organizational commitment called WIDE (Welcoming, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity). LCFS intentionally and strategically leverages our ability to be an active social impact organization that advocates and institutes equitable treatment, vision and justice for children and families served, foster parents and the people serving within our organization. All levels of staff and foster parents are consistently engaged in building their capacity to live out the WIDE values. This includes learning opportunities to enhance competence, cultural humility, healing, and a reflection of values that aid in achieving the mission of LCFS and partnering with children involved in the child welfare system. WIDE has measurable goals, objectives and outcomes for staff and critical stakeholders, such as foster parents. This training was recommended by LCFS' Inclusion Council. The mission of the LCFS Inclusion Council is to support LCFS in becoming a welcoming, inclusive, diverse and equitable organization.

9. LCFS believes that communication and expedited resolution of issues, which are raised by foster parents, are imperative and supports the collaborative process of caring for children and families as well as ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. As such, it is the Agency's expectations that telephone calls and other means of communication are responded promptly. They are expected to keep foster parents informed of significant Agency and/or program changes and to ensure that foster parents have a voice, and to provide foster parents with the ability to share their thoughts and expressions with the Agency.

## **2. THE RIGHT TO BE GIVEN STANDARDIZED PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND APPROPRIATE ONGOING TRAINING TO MEET MUTUALLY ASSESSED NEEDS AND IMPROVE THE FOSTER PARENT'S SKILLS.**

1. All unrelated foster parents are required to participate in the mandated 44-hour Pre-Service Training called PRIDE (Parent's Resource for Information, Development, and Education) prior to being able to accept any placement. The 44 hours of training include a required orientation (2 hours), PRIDE In-Service Training (27 hours), and Supplemental Videos (15 hours).

2. Related and fictive kin foster parents interested in licensure are required to complete 6 hours of Home of Relative PRIDE Training. Relative and fictive kin foster parents are able to complete this training via virtual instructor lead class. Completing the relative training via DVD is available at sites that still have DVDs for distribution if a family is unable to attend a virtual training.

3. A foster family home license is valid for 4 years. Each foster parent, both licensees if the couple is married, must complete a minimum of 16 hours of training in order to renew their traditional foster home license. In order to stay on pace to meet licensing requirements, foster parents are encouraged to complete 4 hours of continuing education training each calendar year of licensure.

4. If the foster home has an expanded capacity license, each licensee is required to complete an additional 9 hours of training each calendar year for renewal; resulting in a total of 52 hours of training needed for renewal.

5. If the foster family has a specialized license, each licensee is required to complete an additional 12 hours of training each calendar year for renewal; resulting in a total of 64 hours of training needed for renewal.

6. Licensing representatives discuss training needs during the six-month compliance monitoring visits. Child welfare specialists discuss training needs with foster parents during their home visits. It is recommended that foster parents gear their continuing education course topics to those that support the specific needs of the children in their care. The child welfare specialists and licensing representatives work closely with foster parents to assist them in identifying and locating trainings that would assist them in meeting the needs of the children placed in their care.

7. LCFS encourages foster parents to engage in training opportunities through LCFS, DCFS, and other community resources. Foster parents are able to obtain training hours through the reading of approved books, viewing approved videos, or completing online and in-person trainings. In some instances, foster parents will need to complete and submit a Training Credit Approval Form (TCAF) along with supporting documentation (i.e. certificate of completion) in order for the training to be approved by the Department and added to the foster parent's training transcript. TCAFs should be submitted to the DCFS Training Unit within 30 days of completion of a training. Foster parents can access their training transcripts on the DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) website ([www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org)). Additionally, foster parents are encouraged to contact the DCFS Training Unit at 877-800-3393 if further assistance is needed.

8. Foster parents can find a list of pre-approved trainings by going to [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org). Under the APPROVED IN-SERVICE CREDIT link, which will be located after clicking the Foster Parents link on the top of the page, caregivers will then be provided with several different links that will take them to a list of approved trainers. Offered trainings involve some of the following topics: educational advocacy, protecting and nurturing children, child development, substance abuse exposure, adolescence, supporting the relationship between children and their birth families, mental illness, trauma, self-care and teamwork.

9. Foster parents can identify trainings in the community and submit a TCAF for approval. Trainings must address at least one of the five competencies of PRIDE: 1) protecting and nurturing children, 2) meeting developmental needs / addressing developmental delays, 3) supporting relationships between children and families, 4) connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime, and 5) working as a member of a professional team.

10. During Regional and Statewide Foster Parent Conferences, the Agency provides foster parents and staff several different training breakout sessions to attend. Foster parents, agency staff, as well as outside providers are recruited to assist and provide these trainings. As a result of COVID-19, in-person conferences were not held; instead, each region offered their own virtual event to connect with foster parents in their immediate area.

11. As needed, LCFS will provide individualized trainings for foster parents. These trainings are usually conducted by a LCFS nurse and/or clinician and cover specific medical and/or behavioral needs of youth who are placed in the foster family's care. LCFS will recommend and/or refer foster parents to external trainings based on the needs of the family.

12. Training schedules are available to foster parents on the DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) throughout the calendar year and are announced at meetings, licensing monitoring visits, and other training and social events. LCFS provides alternative training schedules, including day and evening hours as well as weekend trainings, to accommodate foster parents' schedules. In some instances, child care may be provided so that foster parents are able to attend.

13. Licensing representatives, child welfare specialists, and supervisors are utilized to model skills and offer support to caregivers. LCFS understands the importance of utilizing experienced foster parents to model skills and provide real life examples to other foster parents. This is encouraged during support meetings, social events, and agency sponsored trainings. During these events, LCFS will work with experienced foster parents to provide their knowledge and experience to other foster parents to allow our foster parents to learn from each other. This co-training can include foster parents presenting on a topic and/or leading discussions.

14. Licensing representatives and DCFS notify foster parents of the supplemental and module trainings in their community through the foster parent newsletter, selected mailings, via email and during in-person licensing monitoring visits. LCFS offers trainings regionally. These trainings are featured in the LCFS Foster Parent Newsletter and are posted on the [www.lcfs.org](http://www.lcfs.org) website. Trainings offered through agency-guided support groups may be approved for continuing education credit through the facilitator or by submitting a TCAF.

Check with your licensing worker if such trainings should be submitted for approval by the Department.

15. All licensing representatives maintain training logs which are kept in each foster parent's licensing file. At the six-month compliance visit, foster parents should inform their licensing representative of any trainings completed since the last compliance visit. Licensing representatives are to update the training log at least every 6 months.

16. Foster parents are able to obtain credits from training that they may receive from counselors, physicians, physical therapist, and other medical professionals with the appropriate supporting documentation and a TCAF.

17. Any foster parent that obtained their license prior to July 1, 2021 is also now required to completed 3 hours of supplemental LGBTQI+ training in order to have their foster home license renewed. This training is part of the required 15-hour Supplemental Training that new prospective foster parents complete during their PRIDE training.

**3. THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED AS TO HOW TO CONTACT THE APPROPRIATE CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE AND TO ACCESS SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOSTER PARENT'S CARE.**

1. Foster parents are able to contact their child welfare specialist, licensing representative, supervisors, and regional director or any other staff member by contacting their local office. Each local office has an emergency/after-hours numbers that can be utilized by foster parents for contacting agency staff outside of office hours in the event of an emergency or crisis involving the youth(s) in their care. The emergency/after-hours number is provided on the general voice mail message for each local office. The general numbers for each office are as follows:

- Belleville - (618) 234-8904
- Evergreen Park (773) 753-0600
- Decatur (217) 428-8380
- Joliet (815) 409-4440
- Kankakee (815) 929-1970
- Mt. Vernon (618) 242-3284
- Oakbrook (630) 543-5170
- Quincy (217) 214-2012
- Springfield (217) 523-4725

2. In case of an emergency that occurs outside normal business hours, foster parents are able to utilize the emergency/after-hours service. The emergency/after-hours service will take a message from the foster parent and then rely the message to the on-call staff. The on-call staff Child Welfare Specialist or Supervisor will return the foster parent's call within 30 minutes to address the concern. Foster parents are provided with the emergency/after-hours number during the licensure process and when youth are placed in their care. The numbers are also printed regularly in the Foster Parent Newsletter. In addition, the emergency/after-hours number is provided on the general voice mail message for each local office. The emergency/after-hours numbers for each office are as follows:

- Belleville (618) 409-4092
- Evergreen Park (800) 673-6828
- Decatur (217) 972-4302
- Mt. Vernon (618) 316-4119
- Oakbrook, Joliet and Kankakee (708) 237-6021
- Quincy (217) 779-1484
- Springfield (217) 502-9681

3. All foster parents are also provided with the Statewide LCFS number (800-363-LCFS) which can also be used to reach staff when needed.

4. All foster parents and clients are provided with the staff extension and the agency cell phone number for LCFS staff that are working with them.



5. During the course of monthly home visits with the assigned Child Welfare Specialist, and monitoring visits with the Licensing Representative; foster parents are provided with the following support numbers: DCFS Advocacy Office; The Cares Line (SASS – Screening, Assessment, and Supportive Services), Child Abuse Hotline and the Medical Card Replacement Hotline.

6. Foster Parents are provided with the Chain of Command within the agency and they are encouraged by their workers to follow this chain of command if they have an issue or concern that they feel is not being addressed by the worker and/or their supervisor.

7. Foster Parents are provided with the Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure, as well as the LCFS Service Appeal Process as well as the LCFS Grievance Procedure. Foster Parents are provided support and direction from staff if and when they express wanting to file a Grievance within LCFS.

#### **4. THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE TIMELY FINANCIAL REIMBURSEMENT COMMENSURATE WITH THE CARE AND NEEDS OF THE CHILD AS SPECIFIED IN THE SERVICE PLAN.**

1. According to LCFS policy and procedure, foster parents receive a reimbursement board check on a regular, monthly schedule. The board checks are mailed to LCFS licensed foster parents between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month. LCFS offers both licensed and unlicensed foster parents the option to receive their monthly board payment by direct deposit. Foster parents should allow seven to ten (7-10) business days for delivery of a paper board check. Foster parents with direct deposit should allow three to five (3-5) days from the mailing date, for their board payment to be reflected in their account.

2. LCFS will re-issue a lost board payment after 30 days of the mailing check if the foster reports not receiving one.

3. Children who are served in the LCFS Specialized Foster Care Programs are paid an increased rate as established by DCFS contracts. Licensed foster parents, who are caring for a child with specialized needs, receive their board payment in the same manner as described in #1.

4. Children who are served in the LCFS Regenerations/RUR Programs are paid an increased rate as established by a DCFS contract. Licensed foster parents, who are caring for a youth under this DCFS contract, receive their board payment in the same manner as described in #1. The board checks are mailed to LCFS licensed foster parents between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month. LCFS offers both licensed and unlicensed foster parents the option to receive their monthly board payment by direct deposit.

5. Annually, LCFS reviews its own procedures, including DCFS procedures, regarding the reimbursement of transportation, school fees and school supplies, recreational and artistic endeavors, camp fees, graduation fees, tutoring costs and respite care. Foster parents need to obtain prior agency approval for items they are seeking reimbursement for. When reimbursement is granted, foster parents will need to provide receipts and verification for the eligible reimbursement items.

6. If there are issues or concerns regarding board payments, foster parents are to contact the assigned CWS, the CWS Supervisor, Licensing Representative or the Licensing Supervisor to report and address the issue or concern. LCFS staff will then contact the LCFS Financial Department to seek clarification and information. Upon receipt of that information, the appropriate staff member contacts the foster parent to achieve resolution.

7. Training regarding the payment authorization process (906 process) and respite services is provided to all child welfare staff members in order to ensure prompt and accurate payment to foster parents.

8. Title IV-E funds are available to cover special needs or events. These funds are for non-recurring expenditures, such as graduation expenses, camp, extra-curricular and recreational activities. Foster parents are provided the policies and procedures needed regarding reimbursement.

9. LCFS provides foster parents with the specific procedures and criteria regarding bed holds. LCFS foster parents must meet the specific eligibility criteria, delineated by DCFS. Child welfare staff members will discuss these situations with foster parents who may be eligible to receive payment through a bed hold.

10. LCFS is currently able to reimburse a foster parent within two (2) weeks of the request's approval. Funds are distributed via direct deposit or check.

**5. THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF A PLACEMENT AGENCY'S PLAN IN WRITING CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF A CHILD IN THE FOSTER PARENT'S HOME. INHERENT IN THIS RIGHT IS THE FOSTER PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT ACTIVITIES THAT WILL PROMOTE THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIS OR HER OWN FAMILY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

1. It is the responsibility of the child welfare specialist to provide the following information to the foster family: (1) the foster care placement payment authorization, commonly referred to as the "906" and (2) the temporary medical card. These two documents are provided to the foster parents within 24 hours, or as soon as possible, after the youth's placement. At the time of placement, or as soon thereafter, the foster parent is also provided with the youth's Health Passport and Initial Health Screener or current medical report and immunizations.

2. LCFS foster parents are provided with the CFS 600-4, which is entitled, "Sharing Information with Caregivers." The CFS 600-4 verifies information the foster parent receives from the child welfare specialist including but not limited to: (1) Case information and history; (2) health and medical information; (3) educational information and history; (4) placement history; (5) behavior/social information; and (6) if any, emergency placements. The CFS 600-4 is completed by the child welfare specialist at the initial placement and updated as additional information is gathered. This document is completed at any subsequent placement changes throughout child's time in out-of-home care. Foster parents receive a copy of this form and sign it as an acknowledgement of receipt of said information. Foster parents have the right to request additional information and are provided with an updated CFS 600-4 after more information becomes available.

3. The 497 Service Plan is a plan that establishes what services and supports a family needs to work towards achieving permanency. The foster parent component of the service plan is developed with the foster family and the other members of the child welfare team. This section of the plan addresses the individual needs of the child and the needs of the foster parents as it pertains to the foster parents supporting the youth in achieving permanency.

4. Child and Family Team Meetings are scheduled quarterly for all cases. Foster parents are considered part of the CFTM team and are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in these meetings. During a CFTM, the service plan, visitation and service needs are discussed in detail by the team. This meeting allows for the foster parent to communicate their concerns, issues and observations related to the case. Currently CFTM are held virtually, via phone or in-person based on the needs and preference of the family and team members. If the foster parent is unable to attend this meeting, the child welfare specialist will follow-up with the foster parent to provide them an overview of what occurred during this meeting. The CWS coordinates with all team members to schedule CFTMs that is convenient for the majority if not all the team.

5. Visitation between the child and birth family requires the cooperation of the foster family. Visitation schedules are established in collaboration among team members, the birth parents, the foster parents, and the Agency's staff members. For new Cook County cases, the visitation plan may be established through mediation at Juvenile Court. If deemed appropriate by the child welfare specialist and/or court, any communication between the

birth parents and children that occurs in the foster home is to be supported and monitored by the foster parents. All parties understand that when shared parenting occurs between foster and birth parents, reunification is supported. It is imperative that foster families are active members of the reunification process.

6. Sibling visitation is required for all children who are not able to be placed with the same foster family. Sibling visits between a minor who is in care and a minor who was not brought into care are not required to occur unless otherwise specified. When children are not placed together, the Department requires that siblings visit at a minimum of four hours per month. Sibling visitation can occur at the same time as parent/child visits if all siblings are present. If the sibling visits occur during the weekly parent/child visits, additional sibling visits are not required.

7. It is not a requirement for foster parents to supervise parent/child visits. Foster parents are encouraged to supervise parent/child visits when they feel comfortable with having direct contact with parents. Supervising these visits allow for shared parenting to take place between the foster family and biological family and can assist in youth return to the care of their parents' sooner.

8. Foster parents, both related and unrelated, who assist in supervising parent/child visits qualify to receive financial assistance for supervising these visits under the Family Reunification Support Service Fee. A foster parent can get reimbursed up to \$400 each month for supervising up to 12 parent/child visits. The assigned worker can assist the family and caregiver with the requirements for this program.

9. It is imperative that foster parents support the children's relationship with their siblings. As such, foster parents are encouraged to assist in ensuring youth placed apart are participating in 4 hours of sibling visitation a month. Foster parents, both licensed and unlicensed, are also eligible to receive financial assistance for supervising sibling visitation outside of regularly scheduled parent/child visits.

10. Foster parents are highly encouraged to assist the agency in transporting youth to and from parent/child and sibling visits when at all possible; as this can also assist the foster family in developing a relationship and becoming familiar with the youth's family and relationships. Foster parents are able to get assistance with mileage/gas when assisting the agency with transportation to these services.

11. An integrated assessment is developed for every child in care that includes information regarding the child, birth parents, and their family backgrounds. For new cases, the integrated assessment is completed in collaboration with the integrated assessment screeners at DCFS within 45 days of case opening. Foster parent involvement and information that they share is crucial in meeting the child's current and possible future needs while in care. In accordance with the Department's Rule 431 regarding confidentiality, the additional information which is relevant to the child's care is shared with the foster family and documented on the CFS 600-4. The child welfare specialist reinforces the importance and need for confidentiality of this information.

12. It is best practice for foster parents to provide LCFS with a written 14-day notice when requesting a change in the child's placement. Whenever possible, foster parents are strongly

encouraged to provide more notice. It is hoped that this additional time provides the opportunity to address the concerns/issues, which have been raised by the foster family, and implement services that will stabilize the placement. LCFS makes all efforts to prevent a disruption in placement. If this is not possible or appropriate, the child welfare and licensing staff members work together to identify an appropriate placement for this child and work together to prepare the child for this change.

13. Upon placement and throughout the child's time with the foster family, the agency reiterates the foster parent's responsibility to respect and promote the child's relationship with his/her birth family and cultural heritage. LCFS maintains that one of the best ways a foster parent can support the child's rights to relationships with their birth family and cultural heritage is for the foster family and birth family to get to know each other.

**6. THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED A FAIR, TIMELY, AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE FOSTER PARENT'S LICENSURE, TO BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A PERSON OF THE FOSTER PARENT'S CHOOSING PRESENT DURING THE INVESTIGATION: THE RIGHT TO BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST AND RECEIVE MEDIATION OR AN ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF DECISIONS THAT AFFECT LICENSING PARAMETERS, OR BOTH MEDIATION AND AN ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW: AND THE RIGHT TO HAVE DECISIONS CONCERNING A LICENSING CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN SPECIFICALLY EXPLAINED AND THE LICENSING STANDARDS VIOLATED.**

1. Within forty-eight (48) hours of receipt of the initial licensing complaint, a licensing representative, who has been trained in the investigative process, conducts an unannounced visit to the foster family. The licensing representative presents the foster parent with a written statement informing them of the alleged licensing violation and explains the investigatory process. A fair and impartial investigation is completed within thirty (30) calendar days. The licensing representative will also inform the foster parent of their right to have an advocate or friend of their choosing present during any interviews conducted during the licensing complaint investigation. The foster parent will be made aware that they will have up to 4 hours to have the advocate or friend present at the time of the interview. If additional time is needed to complete the investigation, the licensing representative may submit a written request to his/her supervisor for an extension.

2. LCFS trains all staff members and foster parents on the rights of foster parents during the investigatory process and the role of various members. During the initial licensing process, foster parents are provided with a copy of their rights regarding the investigation process and Rule 402 which outlines the specific standard for violations in the foster family home. During the initial licensing process, foster parents are educated and informed that during an investigation process, LCFS has the right to remove the children if there is evidence of imminent risk of harm. In addition, foster parents are informed that LCFS can recommend to place the home on an involuntary hold during the investigation and reassessment process. LCFS notifies foster parents of their licensing status both verbally and in writing. During the initial licensing process, foster parents are informed of the process in filing an appeal and the finding through LCFS' grievance procedures. LCFS has established the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure which is a process utilized to appeal violations of the foster parent statute. The Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure is reviewed periodically with all foster parents. Foster parents are part of the process in reviewing and clarifying these procedures. Foster parents have the right in this procedure to appeal decisions through LCFS' organizational structure to have their issues addressed. The grievance procedures regarding any violations of the Foster Parent Law, Rule 340, are addressed in Section 13. Note: Issues such as child maltreatment findings, revocations of licenses, and licensing violations are not handled through the grievance process. Child maltreatment findings, revocations of licenses, and licensing violations are covered by other established mechanisms within DCFS.

3. Foster parents understand that LCFS has the right to conduct separate and individual interviews with any children or household members who reside in the home during the investigation process. LCFS has the right to remove the youth in care from the home if there

is evidence of imminent risk of harm. In addition, LCFS retains the right to be able to recommend that the foster home be placed on an involuntary hold during the investigation and reassessment process. Notification of their licensing status is completed both verbally and in writing.

4. At any point during this investigative process, the foster parents have the right to have a person of their choice present during the interviews. An investigation may be postponed up to four (4) hours to allow for the arrival of the identified person, if requested by the foster parent.

5. Once the licensing investigation is completed by the licensing representative, it is submitted to the licensing supervisor. The licensing supervisor has seven (7) days to approve the recommendations or return for further action. The licensing supervisor submits the completed licensing investigation to the DCFS Agency and Institution representative. The Agency and Institution representative from DCFS reviews the complaint and makes a final decision of the recommendations. If the complaint is determined to be substantiated, a corrective action plan is formulated. The purpose of the corrective action plan is to resolve the violations identified in the investigation. The licensing representative works closely with the foster parents to ensure that they understand each step of resolution with the complaint and how the violation impacts their license. The licensing representative offers support and assistance in the corrective action process.

6. The licensing representative notifies the foster parent of the results of the licensing investigation and what, if any, actions are to be taken. Foster parents will receive written notification of the results and any recommendations. The letter also informs the foster parents of their right to request a supervisory staffing. If this does not resolve the issue, foster parents have the right to request an agency Administrative Review and mediation of the decision.

7. Foster parents have the right to meet with an LCFS supervisor and the investigating licensing representative regarding the results of a licensing complaint investigation and are informed of this in writing. During this meeting, the foster parents' perspective is heard by the Licensing Supervisor in a non-prejudicial and unbiased manner. Their feedback is considered carefully. After this meeting, the Supervisor is responsible for reaching an impartial and fair decision regarding the alleged violation. Foster parents have the opportunity to challenge the findings at the next level of appeal. The Licensing representative is available to assist the foster family and to offer support and assistance throughout this process if they do not agree with the supervisory decision.

8. LCFS has an established Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure. This grievance process is utilized to appeal founded or substantiated violations of the foster parent statute. Other issues, such as the child maltreatment findings, revocations of licenses, and licensing violations, are not handled through this process. These matters are covered by other established mechanisms. The Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure is reviewed periodically with all foster parents.

9. Foster parents are part of the process of reviewing and clarifying these procedures. Foster parents have the right in this procedure to appeal up through LCFS' organizational structure to have their issues addressed. The grievance procedures regarding any violations of the Foster Parent Law, Rule 340, are addressed in Section 13.



10. LCFS staff and foster parents are provided information on the rights of foster parents during the investigatory process and the role of various staff members during this process.

11. LCFS completes an investigation on a LCFS licensed foster home only. If there is a concurrent investigation on the foster home by DCFS, DCFS is investigation if there are any licensing violations. If this is a concurrent investigation with both LCFS and DCFS involved, then LCFS cannot complete the Licensing Complaint Investigation until DCFS concludes with their investigation. During this process, the foster family is encouraged to remain in continual contact with both DCFS and LCFS.

#### Investigation Process and Procedure Overview

At the onset of the investigation, the foster parents are provided with an additional copy of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights, service appeal, 402 Licensing Standards, and the Agency Implementation Plan. These outline the investigation process and role of various staff. Rule 402 Licensing Standards of Foster Family Homes outlines the specific standard for violations in the foster family home. Foster parents are notified of their right to appeal any decisions made through the LCFS grievance procedures. At the onset of the investigation, foster parents are informed of their right to have a person or advocate of their choice present during the interviews and throughout the process. An investigation may be postponed up to four (4) hours to allow for the arrival of the identified person (s). A fair and timely impartial investigation is to be completed within thirty (30) calendar days. If additional time is needed to complete the investigation, the Licensing representative can submit a written request to the Licensing Supervisor for an extension.

#### Investigation Procedure

1. Within forty-eight (48) hours of receipt of the initial licensing complaint, a trained licensing representative conducts an unannounced visit to the foster home.
2. The licensing representative presents the foster parent with a written statement informing the foster parent of the alleged licensing violation and the licensing representative explains the investigation process.
3. The licensing representative conducts interviews with individuals residing in the foster family home. The licensing representative meets with household members separately and together.
4. Following the interview process, the licensing representative documents the recommendations of the licensing investigation. The licensing representative submits the recommendations to the Licensing Supervisor.
5. The licensing supervisor has seven (7) days to approve the recommendations or return the recommendations to the licensing representative.
6. Following the licensing supervisor's approval, the Agency and Institution Representative from DCFS reviews the complaint and makes the final approval of the recommendations. If the complaint is determined to be substantiated, a corrective plan is developed. The corrective plan is developed to remediate the violation.
7. The licensing representative meets with the foster parents to inform them of the results of the licensing investigation and the licensing representative will discuss any actions that need to be taken. When a complaint is determined to be substantiated and a corrective action plan is developed, the licensing representative works closely with the foster parents to ensure that the foster parents understand how the violation

impacts the foster family home license and the licensing representative offers support and assistance in the corrective action process. A follow up letter, explaining the results and recommendations, is sent to the foster parents. In addition, the letter informs the foster parent of their right to request a supervisory staffing. If this does not resolve the issue, foster parents have the right to request an agency administrative review, and mediation of the decision.

8. Foster parents will receive written notification of the right to meet with a supervisor and the investigating licensing representative regarding the results of a licensing complaint investigation. During the meeting, foster parents will have the opportunity to verbalize their opinion to the non-prejudicial and unbiased supervisor. The foster parent's feedback and perspectives will be carefully considered. Following the meeting, the supervisor will reach an impartial decision regarding the alleged violation. Following the meeting, if the foster parents do not agree with the decision, they have the opportunity to file a formal written grievance with the Regional Program Director. In cases where foster parents disagree with the supervisory decision, the licensing representative is available to assist the foster family with moving forward in the appeal process. The Licensing Supervisor informs foster caregivers that if they are unsatisfied with the results or outcome of the supervisory review, they may request an informal review with DCFS.

## **7. THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL OR NECESSARY INFORMATION THROUGHOUT PLACEMENT THAT IS RELEVANT TO THE CARE OF THE CHILD.**

1. LCFS believes that foster parents are integral members of the child welfare team. As such, any information regarding the child for whom they are caring is shared with the foster family as a matter of practice. A major frustration of all team members, including foster parents, is the lack of information at initial placement. LCFS strives to gather quickly as much information as possible in order to share this data with foster parents and thereby, encouraging informed decision making for the children who are presently in their care. LCFS utilizes the CFS 418-J Checklist for Children at Initial Placement. Whenever an issue or condition is identified by the Department of Child Protection (DCP), the child welfare specialist places a high priority on gathering additional information so that all team members, including foster parents, can better meet the needs of the individual child. Additionally, LCFS foster parents are given the DCFS form CFS 600-04, "Sharing Information with Caregivers" form. This document includes the following information: (1) case information and history; (2) health and medical information; (3) educational information and history; (4) placement history; (5) behavior/social information; and (6) emergency placements. The CFS 600-4 is completed by the assigned child welfare specialist during the initial placement and updated as additional information is gathered. Additionally, this document is completed whenever there is a subsequent change in placement for a child. Foster parents receive a copy of this form and sign it as an acknowledgement of receipt of said information. DCFS Foundations Training and LCFS trains child welfare specialists on how to obtain and share appropriate information.

2. Throughout the life of the case, the child welfare specialist continues to share pertinent information regarding the child with the foster family. Usually, this occurs during monthly home visits. Additional information is also gathered during Child and Family Team Meetings and from internal or external service providers. When new information becomes available this is shared with all involved team members. In addition, Child and Family Team Meetings occur quarterly or whenever circumstances dictate the need for a CFTM, such as possible disruption in the child's current living situation. A Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) can occur when a child moves from their initial placement as well as subsequent placement changes/disruptions. LCFS is committed to placement stability and recognizes its importance to a child's well-being. However, occasionally, it is necessary to move a child. When placement change is necessary, LCFS strives to hold a meeting with all members of the child welfare team which includes current foster parents and potential foster parents. This allows for direct communication of the issues surrounding the disruption so that the potential foster parent can receive first-hand information relevant to the child. In addition, pre-placement visits are recommended to ensure a smooth transition.

3. The team, including the child welfare specialist and the supervisor, is required to share non-confidential, pertinent information as soon as possible with the foster family. By doing so, the foster family can make informed decisions regarding their ability to provide the appropriate care to the youth in care. This is particularly important when the child presents atypical behaviors and physical conditions. Whenever possible, this information is given to the foster family in writing prior to placement utilizing the DCFS form CFS 600-4. Examples of such information include: changes in permanency goal, visitation schedule,

and/or family composition. Certain information is protected by the Confidentiality Act and cannot be shared with foster parents (e.g. psychological evaluations of birth parents). It is expected that child welfare specialists discuss with the foster family only the findings and the recommendations of counseling and psychological reports that are relevant to the daily care of the child. Training of foster parents in appropriate disclosure of information is provided on an ongoing basis. Child welfare specialist receive training during Foundation Training and during regular supervision Workers are reminded during this time of the importance of obtaining and sharing all information with foster parents which is pertinent to the care of the child. LCFS requires mandatory training for all employees on such topics as HIPAA and Confidentiality.

4. It is the practice at LCFS that supervisors discuss each child and family with the child welfare specialist and document these supervisory sessions. This is a critical strategy to ensure accountability. During the discussion with the child welfare specialist, it is noted what information has been shared with the foster family. If it is discovered that relevant information has not been shared with the foster family, a plan for doing so is developed in an appropriate time frame.

5. Foster parents are required to keep a folder of all pertinent child records. The purpose of the folder is to keep necessary information about the youth in care accessible. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to share any concerns or accomplishments that occur with the children in their care. Early identification of concerns is necessary to ensure that the appropriate supports and services are put into place to minimize the chance of disruption and to provide the needed assistance to foster parents and the children in their foster home.

6. Dissemination of information is shared by the child welfare specialist and licensing staff members. The direct service staff members (child welfare specialists and their supervisors) are responsible for child-specific information and telephone numbers. Licensing staff members are responsible for distribution of the appeal procedures and list of possible questions that could be asked at the time of initial placement.

7. Licensing staff regularly check-in with foster parents to see how they are doing with their placements. Licensing staff continually reminds all foster parents that licensing in there to provide ongoing supports and any recommendations to assist them in caring for their foster child(ren).

**8. THE RIGHT TO BE GIVEN INFORMATION CONCERNING A CHILD FROM THE DEPARTMENT AS REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (U) OF SECTION 5 OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT AND FROM A CHILD WELFARE AGENCY AS REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (C-5) OF SECTION 7.4 OF THE CHILD CARE ACT OF 1969.**

(C-5) Whenever a licensed child welfare agency places a child in a licensed foster family home, the agency shall provide the following to the caretaker:

(1) Available detailed information concerning the child's educational and health history, copies of immunizations records (including insurance and medical card information), a history of the child's previous placements, if any, and reasons for placement changes, excluding any information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous caretaker. In addition, LCFS foster parents are given the DCFS 600-4 form, "Sharing Information with Caregivers." The CFS 600-4 verifies information the foster parent receives from the child welfare specialist including but not limited to the following: (1) case information and history; (2) health and medical information; (3) educational information and history; (4) placement history; (5) behavior/social information, and (6) emergency placements. The CFS 600-4 is completed by the assigned child welfare specialist at the initial placement and updated as additional information is gathered. Moreover, this document is completed at any subsequent placement change throughout the time a child is in out-of-home care. Foster parents receive a copy of this form and sign it as an acknowledgement of receipt of said information. Lastly, a copy of the completed CFS 600-4 is given to the licensing staff members and is placed in the foster parents licensing file.

LCFS provides information in the following areas: education and if applicable, the child's Individual Educational Plan, the medical card, and the results of the child's current dental and physical examinations. It is recommended this information be kept in the foster parent's folder for each child in placement. Generally, the history of a child's placement is provided to the foster parent prior to the initial placement of a child in their home. The child welfare specialist discloses to the caregiver the youth's behaviors and reason for the youth's prior disruption.

Specifically, the foster parent is provided a copy of the service plan that only pertains to the child, including any visitation arrangements and any other provisions that are related to the child. The child specific components of the service plan are given to the foster parents. Foster parents are informed that the visitation schedule frequently changes and their input will be solicited. Any such changes are shared with the foster family by the child welfare specialist within 24 hours of changes. The child's individualized educational plan is shared. Foster parents receive a copy of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Child welfare specialists are required to review and discuss the IEP with the foster parent. In addition, the foster parents are encouraged to take an active role in the child's education and participate in all school staffing and events. The name and telephone number of the Department's educational liaison is given to all of LCFS's foster parents and are encouraged to contact the educational liaison if they have questions or need assistance.

LCFS shares with foster families any known social or behavioral information that includes but is not limited to any criminal history, fire setting, sexual abuse, substance abuse, and any other destructive behaviors.

Foster parents are not only given the child specific service plan but the plan is discussed with them as well. Furthermore, a staffing is conducted with the foster parent, child welfare specialist, licensing representative, program supervisor and therapist, if applicable, to ensure everyone understands the dynamics surrounding the circumstances that led to the child entering out-of-home care. In addition, the information, which has been collected through an Integrated Assessment, is shared with the foster family.

LCFS may prepare a written summary of the information, required by this subsection, and provide to the foster or prospective adoptive parent prior to placement. The foster or prospective adoptive parent may review the supporting documents in the child's file in the presence of the child welfare specialist. In the case of an emergency placement, child welfare specialists shall, at least, provide information verbally, if necessary, and must subsequently provide the information in writing as required by this subsection. In the case of emergency placements, when time does not allow for the review, preparation, and collection of written information, LCFS shall provide such information as it becomes available.

The Department shall adopt rules necessary for the implementation and regulation of the requirements of this subsection (c-5).

LCFS is committed to gathering all of the necessary child specific information as quickly as possible to provide to the foster parents (no later than 30 days from the time of placement). The initial Child and Family Team Meeting, which occurs within 45 days of the initial placement, is used for information sharing. Written documentation, such as immunizations, academic performance, the child specific service plan, and visitation plan are provided to foster parents.

If foster parents are unable to attend the meetings, the child welfare specialist reviews and discusses the meeting detail with the foster family at the next scheduled home visit. Any vital information, which has been obtained, is given to the foster family immediately. If the change is substantial, such as a goal change ordered by the court, foster parents will be notified within 24 hours. For all other changes, foster parents will be informed within 48 hours.

LCFS utilizes regular supervision between the child welfare specialists and supervisors to ensure that all available and necessary information is shared with the foster parent(s). Documentation of their contacts with the foster family is given to the Supervisor for review and approval.

Supervision notes are documented in SACWIS. These notes include the issues and concerns that were discussed as well as the supervisory direction and consultation. This includes what information needs to be shared with foster parents.

Moreover, the Regional Director holds regular supervisory conferences with their front-line supervisors. During these conferences, contacts between foster parents and direct line staff members are reviewed, as well as what information has been shared with the foster family. The multilevel system of supervision is one way in which LCFS ensures that foster parents are provided with the best possible information so that their ability to provide optimum care to children is maximized.

In addition to receiving information during Foundations Training, Child Welfare Specialist learn through agency trainings, supervision and all staff meetings when and how they need to share child specific information with the necessary stakeholders throughout the life of the case.

**9. THE RIGHT TO BE NOTIFIED OF SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND STAFFINGS CONCERNING THE YOUTH IN CARE IN ORDER TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CASE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS REGARDING THE CHILD, INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANNING MEETINGS; THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED OF DECISIONS MADE BY THE COURTS OR THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CONCERNING THE PLAN OF SERVICES FOR THE CHILD AND TO HAVE THAT INPUT GIVEN FULL CONSIDERATION IN THE SAME MANNER AS INFORMATION PRESENTED BY ANY OTHER PROFESSIONAL ON THE TEAM; AND THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS ON THE TEAM; AND THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THE YOUTH IN CARE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TEAM, INCLUDING THERAPISTS, PHYSICIANS, AND TEACHERS.**

1. All members of the child welfare team, (child welfare specialist, supervisor, licensing representative, licensing supervisor, case assistant, counselor, and foster parents) are responsible for giving timely notification regarding scheduled meetings to foster parents. Foster parents are encouraged and notified via mail, telephone calls, in-person, and during home visits to attend such meetings to ensure they receive all pertinent information regarding the needs of the child. The foster parents' contribution and input are considered essential to all planning since they are the ones providing daily care and observing the behavior of the child. If a foster parent is unable to attend the meeting or staffing, the child welfare specialist is responsible for informing the foster parent of any actions taken regarding the care, placement, and service of the child within 5 working days.

2. When the permanency goal is reunification, all parties are notified of the Child and Family Team Meetings. This expectation is delineated in DCFS policy. The initial Child and Family Team Meeting is to occur within 45 days of case assignment and held at least quarterly thereafter. Child welfare specialists are to encourage the foster parents' attendance and participation in these meetings and are a way to reinforce that LCFS considers them vital members of the team.

3. If it becomes necessary to conduct a Clinical Intervention to Preserve Placement (CIPP) staffing on a child in placement, the child welfare specialist completes a CIPP referral form that documents all individuals invited to the CIPP. The foster parent is always included as an invited member of the team. Prior to submission of the CIPP documents, supervisors review the information to ensure that foster parents are part of the process. Upon submission of the CIPP documents, the CIPP team ensures that all parties are notified verbally and/or in writing of the time and location of the CIPP meeting.

4. Foster parents are notified by telephone, in-person, and/or by mail of Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), court hearings, and visits as well as location of these events. If a foster parent is unable to attend any of these events, all pertinent information concerning the child is given to the foster parent in a timely manner. Foster parents are expected to communicate on a regular basis with the child welfare team so that their concerns, knowledge, and issues are part of the ongoing plan for the care of the child.

5. Child welfare specialists are responsible for completing a Case Review Monitoring Report (CRMR) and submitting it to DCFS in order to ensure that foster parents receive timely notice of Administrative Case Reviews. The Case Review Monitoring Report ensures that



foster parents receive notification directly from the Department about the time and location of this meeting for any child in their care.

6. Foster parents are provided information on the LCFS grievance procedure at the time of licensing. Foster parents are routinely informed of the LCFS service appeal process through the Foster Parent Newsletter and during licensing monitoring visits.

7. LCFS reviews records quarterly as part of its peer review process, to ensure that foster parents are notified of staffing, court hearings, and visits. Relevant documents are reviewed for foster parents' signatures. The results of these reviews are presented to supervisors, managers, and directors for follow-up actions. In addition, supervisors check for compliance during supervision on a quarterly basis.

8. Child welfare specialists' schedules are reviewed by their supervisors on a monthly basis as a way to ensure that the appropriate events are occurring as planned and/or needed. Supervisors are ensuring that foster parents are receiving proper notifications. All these activities are documented in SACWIS supervision notes.

9. It is the Child welfare specialist's responsibility to inform foster parents of the results of court hearings within 48 hours of a court hearing. In addition, the child welfare specialist will discuss the outcome of all court hearings during the next scheduled home visit and at that time the foster parent will be informed of the next hearing date. This information may be provided to the foster parent in writing.

10 The child welfare specialist should inform the foster parents of any changes to State rules/regulations during any Pandemic. The scheduling of video conferences, court hearings and/or other meetings held via video conferences will be discussed and scheduled with the foster parents to insure they are properly notified and able to participate in any meeting such as court hearings, CFTMs, ACRs and CIPPs.

**10. THE RIGHT TO BE GIVEN IN A TIMELY AND CONSISTENT MANNER, ANY INFORMATION A CASE WORKER HAS REGARDING THE CHILD AND THE CHILD'S FAMILY WHICH IS PERTINENT TO THE CARE AND NEEDS OF THE CHILD AND TO THE MAKING OF A PERMANENCY PLAN FOR THE CHILD. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CHILD'S FAMILY SHALL BE LIMITED TO THE INFORMATION THAT IS ESSENTIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF AND PROVIDING CARE TO THE CHILD IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD'S FAMILY. WHEN A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP EXISTS BETWEEN THE FOSTER PARENT AND THE CHILD'S FAMILY, THE CHILD'S FAMILY MAY CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.**

1. Upon receipt of an intake from DCFS, LCFS receives preliminary information regarding why the child came into care. This information is used to complete the DCFS CFS 2017 form (Caregiver Matching Tool), which assists in identifying possible placements. Foster parents receive any and all pertinent information for the care and needs of the foster child when this information is available to the child welfare specialist. Within 10 days, LCFS foster parents are given the DCFS form CFS 600-4 which is entitled, "Sharing Information with Caregivers." The CFS 600-4 verifies information the foster parent receives from the child welfare specialist. This information includes, but is not limited to, the child's case history, covering his/her legal status, permanency goal, educational performance, and medical history. Information sharing is a vital way to focus on meeting the needs of children and achieving positive outcomes on their behalf.

2. LCFS child welfare specialists assist the birth parents in sharing personal information about themselves with foster parents. If they decide to do so, a written release of information is signed by the birth parents. Foster parents are reminded that information, which is shared with them, can only be discussed with authorized individuals as indicated in the confidentiality agreement which was signed during the initial licensing process and subsequent renewals of licensure.

3. The sharing of information regarding each child in care allows foster parents to be well informed and well prepared to care for each child in their home. Therefore, it is encouraged to have caregivers speak to one another as it strengthens their understanding of the child's needs and enhances their ability to meet a child's needs. Full disclosure facilitates the ability of foster parents to enhance the well-being of a child and facilitate the achievement of permanency in a timely manner.

4. Foster parents are encouraged to ask questions they may have regarding a child who may be placed in their care. Asking questions assists foster parents in their decision making and may ensure the foster parents are able to meet the specific needs of the child. When possible, pre-placement visits and/or Child and Family Team Meetings are held prior to the placement of a child. These actions add to the decision-making process of foster parents.

**11. THE RIGHT TO BE GIVEN REASONABLE WRITTEN NOTICE OF (i) ANY CHANGE IN A CHILD'S CASE PLAN (ii) PLANS TO TERMINATE THE PLACEMENT OF THE CHILD WITH THE FOSTER PARENT, AND (iii) THE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE OR TERMINATION IN PLACEMENT. THE NOTICE SHALL BE WAIVED ONLY IN CASES OF A COURT ORDER OR WHEN THE CHILD IS DETERMINED TO BE AT IMMINENT RISK OF HARM.**

1. Foster parents are given a written notice of decision, the CFS 151-B Notice of Change in Placement, in all situations where a decision has been made to terminate the current placement of a child. The CFS 151-B is provided within 14 days prior to any change unless there is imminent risk to the child. When LCFS makes a critical decision to move a child, the foster parents are given a written notice that includes the specific reason for the change or termination of the child's placement and notification of the foster parent's right to appeal the change through DCFS. In the CFS 151-B, the foster parent is provided an avenue to request a clinical placement review where they are able to express their opinions regarding the change in placement. (DCFS CPR# 1-800-225-1431). The LCFS child welfare specialist provides the foster parents with the DCFS service appeal brochure.

2. If LCFS determines that a foster child is at imminent risk of harm, the 14-day notice is waived, and the child is immediately removed from the foster home. The foster parents are given written notice of the full reasons for the termination of the child's placement. The foster parent is given the CFS 151-B, which includes information on appeal rights. The 14-day notice may be waived in the event of a court order dictating a change in placement. The foster parent may waive the 14-day notice if both parties are in agreement.

3. LCFS acknowledges the foster parent's right to give LCFS a written fourteen-day notice for the removal of a child. Every effort is made to maintain the placement and put additional supports in place to preserve the placement. If these efforts are unsuccessful, LCFS is committed to comply with their request and to provide special support until a new placement can be identified.

4. LCFS's appeal process is available throughout the year, and the process is highlighted in the Foster Parent Newsletter.

**12. THE RIGHT TO BE NOTIFIED IN A TIMELY AND COMPLETE MANNER OF ALL COURT HEARINGS, INCLUDING NOTICE OF THE DATE AND TIME OF THE COURT HEARING, THE NAME OF THE JUDGE OR HEARING OFFICER HEARING THE CASE, THE LOCATION OF THE HEARING, AND THE COURT DOCKET NUMBER OF THE CASE; AND THE RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN COURT PROCEEDINGS OR TO SEEK MANDAMUS UNDER THE JUVENILE COURT ACT OF 1987.**

1. Information about court hearings, including the court dates and the nature of the court proceedings, is provided to the foster parents by the child welfare specialist. Foster parents are encouraged to attend these proceedings. Documentation of these discussions between placement staff and foster parents are documented in a case not and located in the case file.

2. Supervisors receive and review their workers' monthly schedules that include dates of court hearings and are responsible for monitoring their workers' compliance with this notification. During individual supervision, supervisors are responsible for reviewing court dates and ensuring that the child welfare specialist is encouraging foster parents' participation. Discussion of court proceedings is covered in the quarterly child family team meeting (while respecting birth parent confidentiality). Foster parents are encouraged to attend the Child and Family Team Meetings as well.

3. All foster parents are made aware of their right to be heard during court proceedings. Additionally, they are informed that if their request to be heard is denied, they may file a "writ of mandamus" with an attorney's assistance. Additional training in court procedures is available to foster parents and all child welfare staff members.

4. LCFS makes training available to foster parents regarding their legal rights and the court process so they will feel more comfortable in juvenile court settings. LCFS staff members are trained in the legal rights of foster parents.

5. Lastly, foster parents are able to speak with the youth's assigned Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) as it pertains to court dates, nature of proceedings and any other concerns the caregivers may wish to share with the Courts regarding the youth in their care.

**13. THE RIGHT TO BE CONSIDERED AS A PLACEMENT OPTION WHEN A FOSTER CHILD, WHO WAS FORMERLY PLACED WITH THE FOSTER PARENT, RE-ENTERS FOSTER CARE IF THAT PLACEMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD AND OTHER CHILDREN IN THE FOSTER PARENT'S HOME.**

1. As provided by Illinois law, foster parents who previously had a foster child in their home, have priority in consideration as a placement option unless it is not considered consistent with the best interest of the child or that of other children who may be living with the foster families.

2. According to LCFS practice and procedure, previous foster parents are first considered as the placement option when a child re-enters out-of-home care. The child's previous placement is determined by review of case records on SACWIS. All children who have been served by LCFS are listed in SACWIS.

3. Child welfare specialists, supervisors and licensing staff collaborate in making the optimum choice a child in out of home care. This decision is based on the child's best interest, which includes but is not limited to, their age, needs, family situation, educational placement, family's home community and youth's permanency goal.

4. As well as considering previous foster placements, LCFS will consider placement with a relative or sibling throughout the time he/she are in out-of-home care when a change of placement is warranted.

**14. THE RIGHT TO HAVE ACCESS TO LCFS' APPEALS PROCESS, AND THE RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM ACTS OF HARASSMENT AND RETALIATION BY ANY OTHER PARTY WHEN EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO APPEAL.**

1. Foster parents have access to the LCFS appeal process including the Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure; the LCFS appeal process and the DCFS appeal process. The foster parent is informed by the child welfare specialist or licensing representative of their right to appeal.

2. LCFS uses a two-tier grievance procedure; the first tier is a complaint. LCFS encourages foster parents to resolve any complaints with their assigned child welfare specialist and his,/her supervisor. The second tier is a grievance. The grievance procedure is as follows:

1. When the outcome of the meeting between the foster parent and their child welfare specialist and/or supervisor is not satisfactory, foster parents are able to file a formal written grievance with the Regional Director. The child welfare specialist or licensing representative will provide the foster parent with contact information and the appropriate paperwork to assist in filing a grievance. Foster parents are asked to put the complaint in writing. If a foster parent does not choose to do so, the child welfare specialist will complete the paperwork on their behalf and place a copy in their foster parent file. Within 10 working days of receiving a foster parent's grievance, LCFS will schedule a meeting to attempt to resolve the issue.
2. If the issue is not yet resolved, the grievance is moved to the LCFS Corporate Officer whose authority includes the foster care program. The LCFS Corporate Officer will contact the foster parent to attempt to resolve the grievance.
3. If there is no resolution, the grievance is moved to the Associate Vice President of Strategy & Organizational Excellence and LCFS' Privacy Officer who will convene a Client Grievance Committee. The Committee will review and vigorously discuss the issues, delineated by the foster family. A decision is reached and a written communication is provided to the foster parent within 30 calendar days of receipt of the grievance.
4. If the issue remains unsatisfactory to a foster parent, he/she has the right to appeal to the President and CEO, in writing, within 30 days of receiving the decision from the Committee. The President and CEO will review the foster parent's appeal and respond within 30 days. This determination is final.
5. If a foster parent does not agree with a decision made or action taken by DCFS pertaining to services, a foster parent may do the following:

Appeal within 10 days from receiving notice and the foster parent may be able to stop the Department from acting on its decision until such time that your case has proceeded through the Service Appeal Process. Request a service appeal in writing within 45 days from receiving notice of the decision or action intended to be taken by the Department. If the foster parent does not agree with the decision made in a clinical placement review regarding the change in

placement of a child in your care, request an appeal within 10 days from the clinical placement decision.

6. All grievances that reach the second level of the process are tracked for quality improvement purposes. Non-identifying information is collected and sent to the Associate Vice President of Strategy & Organizational Excellence and LCFS' Privacy Officer to be aggregated and reported quarterly to the Risk Management Committee.
7. This Service Appeal Process is a two-step process. When the issue is the removal or change of placement of a child the Service Appeal Process consists of a clinical placement review of the placement decision and a fair hearing. In all other cases the Service Appeal Process consists of mediation, which is optional, and a fair hearing.
8. If the foster parent feels they are experiencing harassment or retaliation regarding their appeal, they have access to the immediate supervisor and executive management staff members. This issue is discussed during foster parent law training for child welfare staff members. During the training, workers are made aware of LCFS' position regarding the treatment of foster parents who are involved in the appeal process. All staff are required to treat foster parents with dignity and respect.
9. Foster parents are informed of the appeal process at the time of initial licensure and during ongoing trainings. LCFS staff listens and documents the concerns and suggestions of the foster parents. LCFS staff reports issues, concerns, and suggestions to LCFS supervisors. LCFS staff, supervisors and the foster parent will discuss the concerns and suggestions and determine the service needs of the foster parents. On a yearly basis, the LCFS team will review the appeal process and make suggestions that will better serve the foster parents.
10. LCFS has procedures that are specifically related to grievances/appeals. This process was developed with the involvement of foster parents. All LCFS office sites have the grievance/appeal forms and a brochure on how to file a grievance available. In addition, these items are provided to the foster parents during their initial paperwork.

**15. THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED OF THE FOSTER PARENT HOTLINE ESTABLISHED UNDER SECTION 35.6 OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT AND ALL OF THE RIGHTS ACCORDED TO FOSTER PARENTS CONCERNING REPORTS OF MISCONDUCT BY DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES, SERVICE PROVIDERS, OR CONTRACTORS, CONFIDENTIAL HANDLING OF THOSE REPORTS, AND INVESTIGATION BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL APPOINTED UNDER SECTION 35.5 OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT.**

1. During the licensing process the licensing representative provides the foster parents with the following numbers: (1) Office of the Inspector General - 1-800-722-9124 and (2) DCFS Advocacy Office - 800-232-3798 or 217-524-2029. All foster parents are provided with brochures that describes the roles and functions of the DCFS Advocacy Office and the Inspector General's Office. The licensing representatives are available on an ongoing basis to answer any questions a foster parent may have. In the central region location, foster parents have access to a foster parent hotline and are given that contact information.



## **C. STATEMENT OF FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

According to the Foster Parent Law, foster parents have specific responsibilities as a member of the Child Welfare Team above and beyond daily care issues. Fulfilling the following responsibilities are of the utmost importance to the care and well-being of children who are in their care and the Agency is committed to assisting foster parents in meeting their responsibilities.

### **1. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO OPENLY COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM.**

1. LCFS foster parents are essential members of the child and family team. LCFS values the information and knowledge that our foster parents contribute. LCFS continue to strengthen our commitment in improving better communication with our foster parents through our child and family team process. Foster parents are informed of their responsibility to share information about the child for whom they are caring. This expectation is discussed during PRIDE training as well as other ongoing training events. The entire child welfare team should be aware of the children's needs in order to act on their behalf. The Foster parent can speak with their assigned Child Welfare Specialist (CWS) for a complete list of team members for their cases.

2. The responsibility of active and open communication is encouraged between the CWS, Licensing Representative, Counseling and foster parents. Foster parents are encouraged to offer their views and share them with the child welfare team on a regular basis. This may occur during home visits, child and family team meetings, six month monitoring visits, counselling session and Administrative Case Reviews.

3. Foster parents understand that the confidential information they share with the agency staff will be documented in the case records of the child as well as in the foster parent licensing file where appropriate. Also, information shared with the counselors may be documented in the counseling records.

4. Foster parents are instructed to document any behavioral changes they encounter and/or as reported by other individuals who have contact with the child. This can be done by completing the DCFS behavior log form. This documentation is very useful in advocating for any future services the child may need.

5. Foster parents are responsible for reporting any incidents or circumstances which may affect the child's safety and well-being within twenty-four (24) hours to their assigned CWS. For after hour emergencies, the foster parent is expected to call the local office's on-call number. Foster parents are provided with the Agency's business and after-hours numbers by their licensing representative and the child welfare specialist. This information is shared during the licensing process and after any placement of a child/youth with their family. Each LCFS office has their own after-hours number.

It is the responsibility of the child welfare specialist to document all shared information obtained from the foster parent. This information is documented in a SACWIS case note. It is the responsibility of the Licensing Representative for documenting any shared information from the foster parent as a case note. Relevant information is then also shared between licensing and case management when deemed necessary.

**2. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RESPECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION CONCERNING FOSTER CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES AND ACT APPROPRIATELY WITHIN APPLICABLE CONFIDENTIALITY LAWS AND REGULATIONS.**

1. During PRIDE training there is substantive discussion regarding confidentiality and its importance. During the licensing process, foster parents sign the Confidentiality Form, acknowledging their understanding of the Confidentiality Act.

2. Child welfare specialists and licensing representatives constantly reinforce the importance of confidentiality regarding children's personal and family information. Confidentiality is discussed with the foster parent during their six-month monitoring visits and during home visits with the child welfare specialist. The Agency will assist foster parents in abiding by and maintaining confidentiality.

3. Each service site offers training that is provided by Agency staff and outside attorneys/experts regarding confidentiality and other legal issues that are important to foster parents. Moreover, the Child Welfare Code of Ethics is covered in training.

4. Copies of the Foster Parent Law DCFS Rule 331 pertaining to confidentiality, the Agency's Implementation Plan, Foster Parent Law Grievance forms, Foster Parent Law 340, Licensing Rule 402, the Agency's Appeal Process, and DCFS Appeal Processes are given to all licensed foster parents.

### **3. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOSTER PARENT'S CARE.**

1. The Agency supports foster parents in their responsibility to care for and advocate for all youth in care.
2. LCFS encourages foster parents to advocate with the Agency and other providers to obtain the appropriate services for the youth in their care. The Agency will assist foster parents in this task by providing information, support and any additional needed services. CFTMs are a time for team members to discuss and address identified issues being advocated.
3. Foster parents are required to attend six (6) hours of educational advocacy training so they are better able to represent the child's best interests in educational settings. During PRIDE training, foster parents are informed of the value and wealth of information that is disseminated in educational advocacy training.
4. LCFS encourages foster parents to be active members of the team by attending court hearings, administrative case reviews, child and family team meetings as well as any other meetings that relate to the youth in their care. Through this participation, foster parents are able to be advocates for the children for whom they are caring. Foster parents are made aware of their responsibility to attend these meetings and receive notice of these meetings requesting their attendance.
5. Trainings are presented at the Statewide Foster parents Conferences regarding DCFS procedures. These trainings are held jointly with agency staff members and foster parents for the purpose of achieving common knowledge and understanding. Trainings are also provided by DCFS via virtual and in-person to help foster parents on many topics to help them care for and understand the child's needs.
6. LCFS provides foster parents the ability to advocate for the child(ren) in their care by providing specialized training, including child specific medical training by LCFS' nursing staff members, trauma and behavior training by LCFS' counseling staff, and other trainings provided by child welfare specialist and licensing representatives. Foster parents are also encouraged to explore the DCFS approved trainings via the DCFS Virtual Training website to attend trainings regarding these topics.

#### **4. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TREAT CHILDREN IN THE FOSTER PARENT'S CARE AND THE CHILDREN'S FAMILIES WITH DIGNITY, RESPECT, AND CONSIDERATION.**

1. LCFS expects foster parents to treat youth in care and their families with dignity, respect, and consideration. This responsibility is discussed in PRIDE training, ongoing training sessions, in support meetings and in Rule 402 Licensing standards.
2. It is important that foster parents understand the critical significance of primary relationships and the effects that separation from birth families has upon children regardless of the length of time the child has lived with his/her birth family.
3. LCFS monitors the foster parent's interaction with the youth in care and the birth family in order to support them to meet this responsibility. During the licensing process foster parents sign the corporal punishment form. The purpose of this form is to help foster parents understand that it is not appropriate to speak negatively about the child, their birth family, or utilize any type of corporal punishment, verbal abuse, or emotional abuse with the children. The appropriate treatment of youth in care and the importance of their relationship with birth parents and siblings is continuously reinforced through the licensing process, work with the direct service staff including child welfare specialists, supervisors, therapists, and others.
4. Topics which are covered in training sessions include the rights and responsibilities of birth parents, respect and understanding for the birth family, and the impact of separation from birth family has on children.
5. The child welfare specialist engages foster parents in discussion regarding the relationship the youth, siblings, and birth parents have. The child welfare specialist obtains information regarding the child's daily life so that this information may be shared with the child's birth family.
6. Foster parents are encouraged to create a montage of life events (life book) for the youth in care. Foster parents are asked to share pictures of the children with their birth families and to invite them to celebrations as appropriate.
7. As a part of their role, foster parents are expected to support ongoing visitation, telephone calls, and other forms of contact with the child's birth family. Foster parents are to ensure that they are supportive of the child's relationship with their families despite the circumstances that led to the child's removal from his/her birth family.

**5. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RECOGNIZE THE FOSTER PARENT'S OWN INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILIAL STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO ACCEPT A CHILD INTO CARE; AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RECOGNIZE THE FOSTER PARENT'S OWN SUPPORT NEEDS AND UTILIZE APPROPRIATE SUPPORTS IN PROVIDING CARE FOR YOUTH IN CARE.**

1. Through PRIDE training and ongoing assessment of the foster parents, LCFS staff ensures that foster parents have realistic views of their individual and family strengths and limitations regarding youth in care. It is the responsibility of LCFS to discuss their strengths and limitations, identify training opportunities that may strengthen their ability to care for children, and seek support systems and resources. Licensing representatives and child welfare specialists assist foster parents in identifying resources to assist them in their role as foster parents. All support is focused on assisting and supporting foster parents in their role as caretakers.

3. The purpose of assessing the foster parent's strengths and limitations is to make an appropriate, well-matched placement that ensures stability in the lives of children. The licensing representative completes an initial assessment that details the issues/behaviors that a prospective foster parent feels capable and competent. The "Matching Tool" is used to delineate the strengths and abilities that foster parents possess. In addition, when a child has specialized needs, the process is a transitional one when youth, who are being discharged from a residential treatment setting to a foster family.

4. Foster parents and LCFS staff are partners in ensuring that foster parents continue to develop their skills and awareness regarding the children in their care. LCFS requires training for foster parents as one way to expand their talents, strengths, and skills.

5. An open dialogue with the foster parent, child welfare specialist, and licensing representative assist in assessing strengths and limitations and enables the Agency to best utilize the talents of the foster parents.

6. If needed or recommended, foster parents are expected to accept additional services in order to strengthen their ability to care for children.

## **6. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BE AWARE OF THE BENEFITS OF RELYING ON AND AFFILIATING WITH OTHER FOSTER PARENTS AND FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CARE AND SERVICE TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

1. LCFS coordinates events, such as the annual regional Foster Parent Conferences, a Statewide Foster Parent Conference, as well as regular and ongoing training opportunities to allow foster parents to come together and build an additional support system and connection with their peers. LCFS informs foster parents of these opportunities by mail, email, during in-person monitoring visits and through the agency newsletter. As a result of COVID-19, these events have been transitioned to virtual events which have been conducted both regionally and statewide.
2. Foster parents are given the opportunity during training sessions to network with other foster parents to further provide support, increase knowledge base, and to improve skills. Foster parents are encouraged to write articles for the Foster Parent Newsletter in order to share their experiences and to provide information.
3. The Agency arranges social events, such as holiday parties and picnics which offer opportunities on an informal basis for interaction with other foster parents. LCFS encourages foster parents to attend these events in order that they may continue to be well-informed, to acquire the support they need, and to share their skills and expertise with other foster parents.
4. LCFS foster parents receive Fostering in Illinois, flyers from the Illinois Foster Parent Association, and quarterly LCFS Newsletters. Foster parents are encouraged to attend foster parent advocacy groups in their communities.
5. LCFS foster parents who attend the State of Illinois Foster Parent Conference are requested to share information with other foster parents at the next foster parent training session so that other foster parents are more informed of day-to-day service delivery procedures.
6. LCFS celebrated our foster parents LCFS offers monthly Foster Parent Support Group Meetings that are held virtually. These meetings allow our foster parents another avenue to connect with other foster parents and discussing caring for youth in care and challenges that they may be endure. These meetings are offered in both Spanish and English.
7. LCFS has a partnership with Be Strong Families to offer monthly Parent Café meetings. These sessions are held in-person and virtually. Child care is often provided to the participants. These parent café meetings allowed for LCFS foster parents to connect with foster parents from other local agencies.

## **7. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ASSESS THE FOSTER PARENT'S ONGOING INDIVIDUAL TRAINING NEEDS AND TAKE ACTION TO MEET THOSE NEEDS.**

1. LCFS Foster parents are responsible for participating in agency and independent training opportunities. They are expected to complete the agency requirements for training. They are encouraged to seek training opportunities in their own community. Foster parents are encouraged to express their specific needs for ongoing training with the licensing representatives, the child welfare specialists, and at the foster parent trainings.
2. Foster parents are encouraged to recommend topics for training that would be beneficial to them. Foster parents are able to share these recommendations with their child welfare specialist, licensing representative or supervisor. In addition, these recommendations can be shared at agency events and training/support sessions. Consultants are invited as needed to provide training to the foster parents.
3. Licensing representatives, as well as the child welfare specialists, can assist the foster parents in acquiring training materials on specific areas of need.
4. Foster parents have access to DCFS training and materials through the DCFS Training Registration Unit and through the DCFS Learning Development Center (LDC) Website. The LDC Site provides schedules for trainings and allows foster parents to monitor their training credits on an ongoing basis. Foster parents needing assistance with the DCFS Virtual Training Site can contact their licensing representative of the DCFS Training Unit at 877-800-3393.
5. LCFS offers at minimum one training opportunity each month for our foster parents. Currently these trainings are being offered in person and virtually.

**8. THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO DEVELOP AND ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO PREVENT PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS, RECOGNIZING THE TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS ON A FOSTER CHILD, AND ALL OF THE FOSTER FAMILY; AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE FOSTER CHILDREN AND MEMBERS OF THE FOSTER FAMILY IF PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES FAIL AND PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS OCCUR.**

1. It is the foster parent's responsibility to discuss with the child welfare specialist any difficulties they are experiencing with the children in their care. Any and all available services will be provided to prevent the removal of children from their home.

2. Foster parents are expected to work together with key community stakeholders such as the Screening Assessment and Support System (SASS), and System of Care (SOC)/Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) to help prevent placement disruption. All foster parents are made aware of the 24-hour emergency number to access SASS/SOC/IPS services by calling the CARES (Community Access Referral and Evaluation and Support) line at 800-345-9049. This number is provided to all foster parents by their child welfare specialist and licensing representative.

3. DCFS SOC/IPS provides annual training to foster parents. Presentations about SASS and SOC/IPS services are provided to child welfare staff members and foster parents.

4. LCFS encourages foster parent to provide a written 14-day notice to the Agency in the event a removal becomes necessary. Throughout the fourteen (14) day period, the foster parent will maintain placement of the child to the best of their ability. If additional time is needed to secure an appropriate placement, the Agency will work in conjunction with the foster parent to stabilize the placement until removal can occur.

5. Upon receipt of a written 14-day notice from a foster parent, it is mandatory that a staffing occur. The staffing must be conducted promptly and before removal of the child. LCFS understands that such decisions need to be addressed promptly. The purpose of the staffing is to first determine if strategies can be put in place to stabilize and maintain the placement. Those involved in the staffing will determine if there is anything LCFS can provide to assist the Foster Parent. If this is not possible, the staffing will determine what strategies to put in place to ensure a seamless transition to the new foster home in order to prevent future disruption. The staffing assists LCFS in tracking the reasons behind placement disruption to support foster parent and help prevent future disruptions.



**9. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE IMPACT FOSTER PARENTING HAS ON INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS; AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ENDEAVOR TO MINIMIZE, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, ANY STRESS THAT RESULTS FROM FOSTER PARENTING.**

1. LCFS encourages foster parents to learn about the impact that fostering can have on individual family members and the family as a whole. This awareness and understanding begins during the licensing phase and continues throughout the foster parenting experience. During PRIDE training, foster parents are informed of the changes that will occur in their family. LCFS Licensing representatives provide on-going assessment during routine monitoring visits and at the time of license renewal. The Child welfare specialist will work in conjunction with the Licensing representative to encourage training relevant to the needs of the placed minor. Additional resources can be located and provided to the foster parents upon request.

2. In September 2020, foster parents located in the Northern Region began participating in a NTDC Training Pilot Program instead of the traditional PRIDE training. This is an eighteen-month long Pilot Program that will address the same concepts of PRIDE.

3. Stress and coping related trainings occur in the LCFS foster parent training curriculum. Training on stress management, how to recognize it and how to apply stress management techniques are included in the training plan for foster parents and LCFS staff. At the training sessions, foster parents are given the opportunity to discuss issues of concern and stress related issues. LCFS Licensing representatives encourage foster parents to utilize the on-going training resources available, including PRIDE On-line Foster Parent Modules DVDs, the VTC (Virtual Training Center) and Foster Parent Café offered by Be Strong Families. Licensing representatives, as well as the Child welfare specialist, can refer foster parents to LCFS counseling for any ongoing support that foster parents require.

4. LCFS provides training for foster parents caring for children who have experienced Trauma. This training discusses compassion fatigue and secondary traumatization.

5. LCFS staff encourages foster parents to communicate questions and concerns regarding their stress related to foster parenting in order to address the issues quickly and to allow LCFS to refer them to supportive services. LCFS Child welfare specialist, discuss stress and the impact of the child's placement during monthly home visits. LCFS Licensing representatives, review and discuss concerns during monitoring home visits. LCFS counseling and professional staff are available to discuss the foster parent's need to relieve stress and identify specific individual needs for foster parents to help prevent placement disruption. Foster parents are encouraged to regularly communicate with their licensing representative for ongoing support and assistance.

6. Respite services are available according to the various foster care contract requirements. Procedures for respite services are reviewed annually for all foster care providers. Licensing representatives and the Child welfare specialist review respite procedures with foster parents during home visits to ensure foster parents are aware of respite services and how to access respite services. Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Law allows for foster parents to use their family members to assist with hourly respite care.

7. Counseling for foster parents regarding issues that surface in their family related to child welfare is available through LCFS. LCFS foster parent can receive one-on-one and family counseling services to assist in developing techniques to lower stress and individual interventions that directly affect placement disruption, stress and the impact of fostering.

8. LCFS offers foster parents the ability to place their license on a voluntary hold. The licensing representative explains that the home will still be required to complete their bi-annual monitoring visits. During a voluntary hold, the homes will not be contacted for placement of youth.

**10. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE REWARDS AND BENEFITS TO CHILDREN, PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND SOCIETY THAT COME FROM FOSTER PARENTING AND TO PROMOTE THE FOSTER PARENT'S EXPERIENCE IN A POSITIVE WAY.**

1. LCFS encourages foster parents to support the belief that effective and nurturing foster care is critical in the development of children who are separated from their families. The efforts of an effective foster parent on behalf of foster children contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society in general. In prior years, foster parents have traveled to Springfield and lobbied in defense of foster parent services and advocated for the importance of these services to children in the foster care system. This proved to be a successful venture.

2. LCFS acknowledges that Foster parents are the best recruiters and advocates for the role.

3. LCFS honors all foster parents for displaying exceptional service to children. These accolades can occur at regional and statewide meetings as well as local appreciation events. In addition, this information is shared in the Agency's Foster Parent Newsletter.

4. The LCFS Marketing Department is working with staff and foster parents in the art of public speaking and how to be a positive representative of the Agency and an advocate for children. The LCFS Marketing and Development Department regularly interviews foster parents, adoptive parents and biological parents about their experiences with the agency. These interviews are then shared with LCFS staff, on LCFS social media pages, agency stakeholders and with the community.

5. The Licensing Department is responsible for informing foster parents of other foster parent organizations for additional resources that would broaden their skills, gain understanding and enjoy fellowship with other foster parents.

6. LCFS shares important information with our foster parents by mail, email and during in person visits to the foster parents home whenever possible. Foster parents are also provided with information for events and festivities such as Holiday Celebrations, focus groups, monthly trainings, and support groups. 2023 marked the 150th anniversary of LCFS serving children and families in Illinois, and our foster parents played a big part of that history and vital part of our future. LCFS focuses on celebrating and recognizing our dedicated foster parents annually and throughout the year because they are a key piece of the circle of support for the children and families we serve.

LCFS foster parents are encouraged to attend regional and statewide Foster Parent Conferences, trainings and support groups offered by the agency. During these events, foster parents can meet other foster parents and share knowledge, skills and resources to help in their roles as foster parents. Online and virtual trainings and supports are available to foster parents as a means to connect, support and engage with other agency foster parents.

## **11. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE ROLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOSTER PARENTS, OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM, AND THE YOUTH IN CARE'S OWN FAMILY.**

1. Foster parents are required to learn the roles, rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in the life of the child by their attendance and active participation in meetings such as administrative case reviews, child and family team meetings, trainings and juvenile court hearings. Based on their understanding of these roles, rights and responsibilities foster parents are able to be effective members of the child welfare team.
2. The “LCFS Foster Parent Role Description” is provided annually to foster parents in an effort to inform and re-education foster parents on their responsibilities. This description is provided to the foster parents by their assigned Licensing representative when they begin the licensure process and is reviewed semi-annually at their licensing compliance visits. Furthermore, this description may be reviewed with the foster parent(s) any time during the licensing process.
3. The roles of each member of the Child Welfare Team are reviewed on a regular basis at quarterly Child and Family Team meetings as well as during foster parent trainings and/or support groups.
4. LCFS schedules regular staff meetings to discuss the roles, rights and responsibilities of the child welfare team.
5. LCFS encourages foster parents to follow the agency’s chain of command if they have a concern or issues regarding the youth in their care or their interactions with the agency. The chain of command is the Child Welfare Specialist, CWS Supervisor, Program Manager (relevant for specific regions), Regional Director, Associate Vice President of Child Welfare, and then the Vice President/Chief Operating Officer. Foster parents are able to reach out to their assigned licensing representative, or front office support staff of their local office, for assistance in contacting the correct individuals for any issues they may encounter.
6. If a foster parent has a concern or issue involving their assigned Licensing Representative, the proper chain of command would be the Licensing Representative, the Licensing Supervisor, the Associate Vice President of Child Welfare and then the Vice President/Chief Operating Officer.

**12. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW AND, AS NECESSARY, FULFILL THE FOSTER PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SERVE AS A MANDATED REPORTER OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT UNDER THE ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILD REPORTING ACT; AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE CHILD WELFARE'S AGENCY'S POLICY REGARDING ALLEGATIONS THAT FOSTER PARENTS HAVE COMMITTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND APPLICABLE ADMINISTRATION RULES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING INVESTIGATIONS OF THOSE ALLEGATIONS.**

1. Each foster parent is informed during PRIDE training and the licensing process of their responsibilities under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. Foster parents are also provided with the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline phone number (800-25-ABUSE). Foster parents are provided training regarding their responsibilities as a mandated reporter. This is reviewed with them during their 6-month monitoring visits with their licensing representatives.

2. Foster parents are required to sign the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status, CFS CANTS 22B, which serves as a contract regarding their mandated reporter responsibilities. This form is reviewed and signed at each licensing renewal.

3. During PRIDE, foster parents are given a written copy of the steps the Agency must take when a report of child abuse and/or neglect is received as it pertains to them and/or their household.

4. Foster Parents are provided with information from their licensing representative and during trainings regarding what they can expect if they are the subject of an abuse and/or neglect allegation by the Department.

5. During the licensure process and at the time of a DCFS Hotline report, the foster parent is advised of what they can expect to occur with the DCFS Hotline report and the concurrent Licensing Investigation that will occur on the household.

**13.THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW AND RECEIVE TRAINING REGARDING THE PURPOSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE CASE REVIEWS, CLIENT SERVICE PLANS, AND COURT PROCESSES, AS WELL AS ANY FILING OR TIME REQUIREMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THOSE PROCEEDINGS; AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE FOSTER PARENTS DESIGNATED ROLE IN THESE PROCEEDINGS.**

1. LCFS assumes the responsibility to provide and/or facilitate the provision of training regarding Administrative Case Reviews, client service plans, and the court process. Trainings incorporate relevant cultural issues to the topics presented. Foster parents are responsible for knowing these processes and for participating in these case activities. LCFS is responsible for training foster parents so they may confidently fulfill those duties.

2. LCFS foster parents are consistently encouraged to attend ACR's, court hearings and CFTMs. Child welfare specialists may provide one-on-one information to the foster parents before, during or after the ACR, CFTM or court hearings to help the foster parents fulfill their roles as foster parents. The foster parent's insight and information on the foster child strengths, behaviors, and specific needs are crucial to making the service plans and permanency goals that are in the best interest of the youth in care.

3. When foster parents attend an ACR, the purpose of the ACR is explained by the reviewer. This allows for the foster parent to be more knowledgeable about case reviews and enables them to participate more fully as a member of the child welfare team.

#### **14. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES APPEAL PROCEDURE FOR FOSTER PARENTS AND THE RIGHTS OF FOSTER PARENTS UNDER THE PROCEDURE.**

1. When presenting the LCFS and DCFS Appeal procedures (including Part 337 Service Appeal Process), LCFS staff members ensure that foster parents fully understand these processes and their rights. Specifically, foster parents are provided with the Foster Parent Bill of Rights, LCFS Rights and Responsibilities and the LCFS grievance procedure during the licensing processes. The foster parent's rights and responsibilities and grievance procedures are discussed with the foster parents at routine licensing monitoring visits. Furthermore, the Licensing representative and/or Supervisor, as well as the Child welfare specialist, are available to foster parents to discuss the grievance and/or appeal process.

LCFS uses a two tier grievance procedure. The first tier is a complaint. LCFS encourages foster parents to work out any complaints within the already established relationship between them and the Child welfare specialist assigned to the youth in their care and, if necessary, his or her Supervisor. The second tier is the grievance. The grievance procedure is as follows:

1. When the outcome of the meeting between the foster parent and their Child welfare specialist and his or her Supervisor is not satisfactory, foster parents are encouraged to file a formal, written grievance with the Regional Program Director or Supervisor. The Child welfare specialist or Licensing Worker will provide the foster parent with the contact information and a form to assist you in filing a grievance should the foster parent request it. Foster parents are not required to put the complaint in writing should they wish to file a formal grievance. If the foster parent chooses not to put the complaint in writing, their Child welfare specialist will do it for them in order to have copy for their foster parent file. Within 10 working days of receiving a foster parent's grievance, LCFS will schedule a meeting to attempt to resolve the issue.
2. If the issue is not resolved, the grievance is submitted to the LCFS Corporate Officer who has the administrative authority over the foster care program. The LCFS Corporate Officer will contact the foster parent to attempt to resolve the grievance.
3. If the foster parent's grievance remains unresolved, the issue is submitted to the Associate Vice President of Strategy and Performance Excellence. The Committee will make a decision and communicate the decision to the foster parent within 30 calendar days of receiving the grievance.
4. If a foster parent is not satisfied with the decision of the Client Grievance Committee, they have the right to appeal to the President and CEO, in writing, within 7 days of receiving the decision from the Committee. The President and CEO will review the foster parent's appeal and respond within 10 days. This determination is considered final.
5. If a foster parent does not agree with the decision made or action taken by DCFS pertaining to service, the foster parent may do the following: Appeal within 10 days from receiving notice and may be able to stop the Department from acting on its decision until such time that the case has proceeded through the Service Appeal Process. Request a service appeal in writing within 45 days from receiving notice of

the decision or action intended to be taken by the Department. If the foster parent does not agree with the decision made in a clinical placement review regarding the change in placement of a child in their care, they may request an appeal within 10 days from the clinical placement decision.

All grievances that reach the second tier are tracked for quality improvement purposes. Non-identifying information is collected and sent to the Director of Data and Information Services to be aggregated and reported quarterly to the Risk Management Committee.

1. Foster parents are expected to attend trainings on the LCFS appeal process, Foster Parent Law, and note pertinent articles in the Foster parent Newsletter and the DCFS Fostering in Illinois Newsletter. Some of these trainings will be jointly held with child welfare staff, and may utilize experts as trainers. Foster parents are reminded during the training programs and in licensing monitoring visits, that foster parents are an important part of the child welfare team and are a necessary resource for the Agency and for children and parents.

2. Foster parents will be informed of community resources, Foster Parent Cafes and support groups to further help them in their role in being a foster parent. These supports are being offered virtually, in-person and online.

***This Service Appeal Process is a two-step process. When the issue is the removal or change of placement of a child the Service Appeal consists of clinical placement review of the placement decision and a fair hearing. In all other cases the Service Appeal Process consists of mediation, which is optional, and a fair hearing. In some instances, you may be able to get a temporary decision on some issues raised by you through an emergency review.***



**15. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING ACCURATE AND RELEVANT RECORDS REGARDING THE CHILD'S HISTORY AND PROGRESS; AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BE AWARE OF AND FOLLOW THE PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS OF THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY WITH WHICH THE FOSTER PARENT IS LICENSED OR AFFILIATED.**

1. At the time of initial placement, LCFS provides the foster parent with a folder to maintain records for each child placed in their home. It is the foster parent's responsibility to maintain all relevant information on the child in the child's folder. The foster parent will present to the child welfare specialist a complete child folder which will be sent to the new foster parent or the Agency when the child is returned home or moves to a new placement.

2. Foster parents are provided training during PRIDE regarding the child specific records that they are required to maintain for any youth placed in their care. Foster parents are providing on-going training and support from the assigned CWS and Licensing Representative regarding how to maintain and how to complete these documents.

3. The foster parent will present to the child welfare specialist the folder quarterly so that the CWS may review the folder for updated materials and acquire copies of needed documentation.

4. During the licensing process and on a continuous basis, foster parents are informed in writing of LCFS' procedures. The foster parent is encouraged to ask questions and give their feedback in order to improve their knowledge of these procedures as they relate to the youth in care.

5. Foster parents are required to complete the behavior and medications logs in order to document any unusual behaviors as well as document the youth's compliance with taking any prescribed medication. This information is to be documented accurately and shared with the child welfare specialist. The child welfare specialist is responsible for providing these monthly logs to the foster parent.

**16. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SHARE INFORMATION THROUGH THE CHILD WELFARE TEAM WITH THE SUBSEQUENT CAREGIVER (WHETHER THE CHILD'S PARENT OR SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER) REGARDING THE CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT IN THE FOSTER PARENTS HOME.**

1. All foster parents and parties involved with the child (including child welfare specialist, licensing representative, counselor and case aide.) are to share and fully disclose all pertinent information regarding the child's adjustment into the home, including aggressive behaviors, triggers, mental health diagnosis and medications with any subsequent caregiver, as well as the child's parent. This disclosure of information supports the child's transition to the new living arrangements and enables an assessment of the child's progress and adjustment. The assigned CWS will discuss the child's adjustment to the placement during monthly home visits and develop necessary interventions with the foster parent. A youth's adjustment and behaviors in their foster home placement are topics addressed during quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings.

2. Ongoing and open communication is expected between the child welfare specialist, licensing representative, birth family members, foster parents and service providers. Foster parents are encouraged to offer their views and share them with the child welfare team on a regular basis during home visits, child and family team meetings, court hearings, ACR's and any other time deemed necessary. Foster parents and parties involved with the child are expected to communicate to ensure information is shared accurately, timely and fairly, and in the best interest of the child.

3. All foster parents will receive training on how to effectively communicate with and provide information with full disclosure to the new foster parent or to the biological family to ensure a successful transition to new placement/reunification.

4. Foster parents will maintain records of children placed in their home. These records will be shared with subsequent foster parents and/or birth parents. Records to be maintained include: medical and educational reports, visitation plans, medication and behavioral logs as well as contact information of all service providers.

**17. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE CARE AND SERVICES THAT ARE RESPECTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE TO THE CHILD'S CULTURAL NEEDS AND ARE SUPPORTIVE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHILD AND HIS/HER OWN FAMILY; THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RECOGNIZE THE INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A CHILD'S CULTURAL IDENTITY WHEN THE RACE AND/OR CULTURE OF THE FOSTER FAMILY DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE FOSTER CHILD; AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO THESE ISSUES.**

1. It is the goal of all members of the child welfare team to be aware and supportive of the child's ethnic, cultural and religious heritage regardless of the orientation of any member of the child welfare team. Additionally, it is the goal of all members of the child welfare team to honor and respect the familial ties of the child and to encourage the child to know and understand his or her own history in a positive light in order to support the healthy physical and emotional growth of the child.

2. Culture and heritage training is provided through the initial PRIDE training. These trainings include 3 hours of supplemental LGBTQI+ training as well as training on the importance of sibling visitation/connectedness. In addition, LCFS offers foster parents training opportunities that support WIDE. In situations where the foster parent and the child's culture and heritage are different, special attention is paid to ensure there is cultural sensitivity and commitment on the part of the foster parent to maintain the child's connection to his/her own culture.

3. Foster parents and LCFS staff are being recruited to be able to meet the cultural and language needs of the children being served. Foster parents are encouraged to meet the cultural needs of the children in their home and provide opportunities for them to participate in culturally sensitive activities. Cultural Competency is also offered as a PRIDE module. Licensing representatives will continue to make referrals for the PRIDE module dealing with cultural competency for foster parents as needed.

4. LCFS encourages foster parents to support the birth family through involvement with family/sibling visits, sharing photos and/or cultural mementos. This provides both the foster and birth family with support for the youth in care. Each can learn caregiving ideas and exchange information that may include cultural traditions and/or birth family traditions. Foster parents that may be of a different race, ethnicity and/or culture background of the placed youth(s) may find it beneficial to learn about the birth family's traditions and values and help facilitate the child's development. LCFS child welfare specialists can assist in the facilitation of exchanges between the foster and birth families.

5. Foster parents are informed of external resources to assist them in meeting any cultural or ethnic differences between themselves and the youth(s) placed in their home. The child welfare specialist, as well as the licensing representative, can assist with connecting the caregiver with these supports and resources.



**LUTHERAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF ILLINOIS**  
**2024 Implementation Plan of Foster Parent Law**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the Implementation Plan of Foster Parent Law and agree to adhere to the document as it pertains to serving in the capacity of a foster parent for Lutheran Child & Family Services of Illinois.

Foster Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Foster Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Licensing representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Summary of Frequently Used Acronyms**

<b>ACR</b>	<b>Administrative Case Review</b>
<b>CA/N</b>	<b>Child Abuse and Neglect</b>
<b>CANS</b>	<b>Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths</b>
<b>CANTS</b>	<b>Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System</b>
<b>CAPU</b>	<b>Case Assignment Placement Unit</b>
<b>CARES</b>	<b>Community Access Referral Evaluation Support Line</b>
<b>CASA</b>	<b>Court Appointed Special Advocate</b>
<b>CBP</b>	<b>Community Based Partners</b>
<b>CIPP</b>	<b>Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation</b>
<b>COA</b>	<b>Council on Accreditation</b>
<b>CWS</b>	<b>Child welfare specialist</b>
<b>DCFS</b>	<b>Department of Child and Family Services</b>
<b>FHP</b>	<b>Foster Home Boarding – Private Agency</b>
<b>FHS</b>	<b>Foster Home Specialized</b>
<b>HFK</b>	<b>Home of Fictive Kin</b>
<b>GAL</b>	<b>Guardian Ad Litem</b>
<b>HMR</b>	<b>Home of Relative (Foster Care)</b>
<b>IA</b>	<b>Integrated Assessment</b>
<b>IEP</b>	<b>Individualized Education Plan</b>
<b>LAN</b>	<b>Child and Adolescent Local Area Network</b>
<b>LCFS</b>	<b>Lutheran Child and Family Services</b>
<b>LDC</b>	<b>Learning Development Center</b>
<b>PRI</b>	<b>Preliminary Report of the Investigation</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>Parent’s Resource of Information Development and Education</b>
<b>PRT</b>	<b>Placement Review Team</b>
<b>QA</b>	<b>Quality Assurance</b>
<b>SACWIS</b>	<b>Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System</b>
<b>SACY</b>	<b>Sexually Aggressive Children and Youth</b>
<b>SASS</b>	<b>Screening, Assessment, and Support Systems</b>
<b>SOC/IPS</b>	<b>System of Care/Intensive Placement Stabilization</b>
<b>SSF</b>	<b>Special Service Fee</b>
<b>WIDE</b>	<b>Welcoming, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity</b>